

In the Claims:

1-5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented) An envelope having encoded thereon a fragile digital watermark representing plural bits of digital data, said watermark comprising a machine-readable pattern that is designed to evidence reproduction by scanning and printing.

7-19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 6 wherein the envelope also includes a franking mark, and wherein the fragile digital watermark and the franking mark are printed by the same printer, having a print resolution of 1200 dots per inch, or less.

21. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 20 wherein the fragile digital watermark and the franking mark are printed by the same printer, having a print resolution of 600 dots per inch, or less.

22. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 20 wherein the fragile digital watermark and the franking mark are printed by the same printer, having a print resolution of 300 dots per inch, or less.

23. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 6 wherein the watermark comprises features of another indicia on the envelope, which indicia features are subtly changed to alter the local luminance or color thereof.

24. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 6 wherein the watermark comprises a texture pattern on the envelope formed by deformation of a substrate material.

25. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 6 wherein the plural bits of digital data represented by the watermark cannot be discerned by human inspection, even with magnification.

26. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 6 wherein the plural bits of digital data are randomized into a pattern, said pattern comprising the fragile digital watermark.

27. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 6 wherein the fragile digital watermark comprises a subtle background pattern that forms no part of any other marking on the envelope.

28. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 7 wherein the envelope also includes a franking mark, and wherein the fragile digital watermark and the franking mark are printed by the same printer, having a print resolution of 1200 dots per inch, or less.

29. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 7 wherein the watermark comprises features of another indicia on the envelope, which indicia features are subtly changed to alter the local luminance or color thereof.

30. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 7 wherein the watermark comprises a texture pattern on the envelope formed by deformation of a substrate material.

31. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 7 wherein the plural bits of digital data represented by the watermark cannot be discerned by human inspection, even with magnification.

32. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 7 wherein the plural bits of digital data are randomized into a pattern, said pattern comprising the fragile digital watermark.

33. (Previously Presented) The envelope of claim 7 wherein the fragile digital watermark comprises a subtle background pattern that forms no part of any other marking on the envelope.

34. (New) An envelope having steganographically encoded thereon an indicia discernible in visible light that indicates, to a suitably authorized detector, data that identifies a device used in franking said envelope, wherein said steganographic encoding represents plural bits of digital data but does not present human-apparent evidence of any data representation.

35. (New) An envelope having encoded thereon a machine readable indicia that indicates, to suitable equipped devices, that image data corresponding to said envelope should not be reproduced, the envelope having a structure adapted to provide an enclosure for mail.

36. (New) An envelope having steganographically encoded thereon a digital watermark representing postage, said digital watermark representing plural bits of digital data but not presenting any human-apparent evidence of any data representation, said digital data being recoverable from scan data obtained by visible light scanning of said envelope.

37. (New) The envelope of claim 36 in which the steganographic encoding takes the form of printing on said envelope.

38. (New) The envelope of claim 36 in which said encoding takes the form of texturing on the surface of said envelope.

39. (New) A method comprising:
receiving an envelope of paper mail through the postal system by an addressee at a delivery address specified on the article;
after receipt, presenting the envelope to a processing device that includes an optical sensing system; and

thereby triggering the device to produce a response corresponding to machine readable indicia formed on said envelope.

40. (New) The method of claim 39 in which the response comprises updating a contact database on said device with information corresponding to a sender of said envelope.

41. (New) The method of claim 39 in which the response comprises sending a delivery confirmation to a sender of said envelope.

42. (New) The method of claim 39 in which the response includes directing an internet web browser to an internet destination.

43. (New) The method of claim 39 that further includes:
transmitting data produced by said device in response to optical sensing of said envelope to a first internet resource;
receiving additional information or entertainment from a second internet resource; and
presenting said additional information or entertainment to said addressee.

44. (New) The method of claim 43 in which said first and second internet resource are the same internet address.

45. (New) The method of claim 43 in which the first and second internet resources are different internet resources, the first internet resource responding with an address of said second internet resource.

46. (New) An envelope having formed thereon two machine readable indicia, a first of said indicia being a franking mark applied by a first party, the second of said indicia conveying data associated with an authorized user of said envelope, the first and second indicia cooperating to confirm that use of said envelope by the first party is authorized.

47. (New) An envelope having encoded thereon a first digital watermark representing plural bits of digital data, said first watermark having a characteristic that degrades in a generally foreseeable manner when a copying process is applied thereto, wherein by analysis of the watermark, a conclusion can be reached as to whether the envelope is an original or a copy.

48. (New) An envelope having encoded thereon a first digital watermark representing plural bits of digital data, said first watermark having a characteristic that degrades in a generally foreseeable manner when a copying process is applied thereto, wherein by analysis of the watermark, a conclusion can be reached as to whether the envelope is an original or a copy, the envelope also having encoded thereon a relatively robust second digital watermark representing plural bits of digital data.

49. (New) The envelope of claim 48 wherein the analysis also considers the second watermark.

50. (New) A method of mail processing, comprising:
generating scan data corresponding to at least a part of an indicia formed on a mail article;
identifying a digital watermark represented in said scan data; and
by reference to said watermark, determining whether the indicia is likely an original or likely a reproduction.

51. (New) The envelope of claim 46 in which at least one of said indicia is steganographic.